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TALK TO AMERICAN JOURNALIST ANNA LOUIS STRONG

WORKING PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE WORLD, UNITE!

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I warmly welcome you on your visit to our country.

It is quite hot these days, and I hope you are well. I extend deep gratitude to you for having come all the way to our country at your advanced age to extend encouraging remarks to our people.

You may encounter inconveniences during your stay in our country, but I hope you will understand that we were liberated from Japanese imperialist colonial rule not long ago.

I know well that you, living long in foreign lands away from your home in the United States, have rendered support, through your writing, to the peoples of the whole world in their struggle against imperialism and fascism and for peace and democracy.

You asked me to tell you about my career, but I have nothing special to tell you. But as you so earnestly asked about it, I shall recount in brief my past life.

I was born in Mangyongdae, a rural village on the outskirts of Pyongyang, and spent my childhood there. Those days were a period when my people, deprived of their country by the Japanese imperialist aggressors, were in great distress. The Japanese imperialists, having occupied Korea, brutally suppressed and killed its people, and plundered its resources and wealth at random. A Korean saying has it that a ruined nation is no better than the dog of a house in mourning. The status of Koreans under the colonial rule of Japan was the same as that of the dog. They did not yield to the harsh suppression of the Japanese imperialists, however. They forcefully turned out in the struggle against the aggressors to win back their country.

As for my family, several persons, including my father, mother and uncle, embarked on the road of anti-Japanese independence struggle. My father was engaged in the struggle

from the days when he was attending a middle school in Pyongyang. In March 1917 he formed a secret anti-Japanese revolutionary organization to become more active in the struggle. He was arrested by the Japanese police and thrown into Pyongyang Prison. After being released, he moved the theatre of his activities to the northern border area of Korea and Northeast China, and there organized and guided the national liberation movement.

When I was seven years old, I followed my father to Northeast China, and attended a Chinese primary school there. After graduation, when I was eleven, I trekked 400 km, all alone, back to Korea true to my father's instructions that if I was to win back the independence of the country, I had to be well acquainted with its reality. While studying at Changdok School, I was informed that my father had been arrested again by the Japanese police. Determined not to come back to Korea again before it became independent, I crossed the Amnok River and went to Northeast China. I was 13 years old then. In the following year, i.e., in 1926, my father passed away in the alien land without achieving his ambition of winning back his country from Japanese imperialism.

After his passing, I embarked on the road of the anti-Japanese independence movement. Attending a military academy run by Korean nationalists in Northeast China, I devoted myself to find a new road of struggle, and formed an anti-Japanese organization. Unhappy with what was taught at the academy, I left it in mid-course. Later, attending a middle school in Jilin, I formed revolutionary organizations and enlisted the broad sections of youths and students in the struggle against the Japanese imperialists.

While in Jilin, I was arrested by the reactionary Chinese warlords. Behind bars, I made a determination to launch an

anti-Japanese armed struggle by relying on the masses of the people. After being released, I made full-scale preparations for the armed struggle.

Giving me two pistols which my father had left behind, my mother instructed me that I should inherit my father's ambition and achieve the independence of the country without fail. Together with my comrades, I accelerated the making of preparations for the armed struggle, and in 1932 organized the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla Army by involving hot-blooded, patriotic young people.

When it was founded, the army consisted of a small number of guerrillas, but it rapidly expanded to become a large force in the course of the armed struggle.

In the early days of the armed struggle, we established guerrilla zones in the vast area along the Tuman River and set up a people's revolutionary government in each of them. In those days, the guerrilla zones served as sturdy fortresses for the anti-Japanese armed struggle.

While intensifying the armed struggle to annihilate the Japanese imperialists, we formed the Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland, an anti-Japanese national united front body, in the latter half of the 1930s by embracing the broad sections of the anti-Japanese patriotic forces. The Programme of the association stipulated that Japanese imperialist rule should be overthrown and a genuine Korean people's government founded, and clarified the democratic measures the government should take–ranging from agrarian reform, nationalization of industries to enforcement of sexual equality and compulsory free education. The founding of the association made it possible to conduct our anti-Japanese national liberation struggle on a nation-wide scale.

After the formation of the association, the military and political activities of the guerrillas were intensified, enjoying the

support of patriotic people of all stripes.

In an attempt to check the influence of the guerrillas over the people, the Japanese imperialists resorted to vicious "punitive" and misleading propaganda operations. They even spread false rumours about me, and offered a huge monetary prize for me. One of their stooges even murdered a Korean, and took his head to the Japanese, saying that it was mine. The report was featured in Japanese newspapers. However, the Koreans did not believe any of their malicious propaganda, but assisted the guerrillas wholeheartedly.

As you have said, many rumours about me were afloat among our people in the days of the armed struggle. Some said that I was capable of soaring above the sky, entering deep underground and shrinking distances. How can a human being do these things? I think this was a manifestation of their trust in me and appreciation of the guerrillas' devoted struggle for them with their active assistance.

After conducting a bloody struggle for about 15 years in the vast areas centring on Mt Paektu while eating and sleeping in the open air, the guerrillas at long last drove out the Japanese aggressors, and achieved the historic cause of national liberation.

You say that I am a prestigious young general, and the saviour of my country and my nation. I do not deserve your high praise. As all other true patriots of Korea did, I only did what I ought to have done for my country and people as their son. I am resolved to devote my life to achieving the independence and sovereignty of my country and the freedom and happiness of my people.

You expressed your admiration for the north Korean people's nation building in an independent way. We are firm in maintaining independent principles in the building of a new, democratic Korea.

It is true that Soviet forces are stationed in north Korea now, but the masters of the building of a new Korea are the Korean people themselves. After the liberation of the country, we formulated the line of nation building in our own way and are resolving in conformity with our people's opinions and by relying on their own efforts all the problems arising in building up the Party, in establishing a people's government, in enforcing democratic reforms and in developing the national economy. Our politics is independent politics embodying progressive democracy.

Frankly speaking, when we started to build a new society after the country's liberation, some people advocated that we should take the road of US-style democracy, and some others said that we should build a Soviet-style democracy. Proceeding from the concrete situation of the country, I made it clear that Korea should take the new road of progressive democracy, not US-style or Soviet-style democracy. The Korean people are striving to build a new, democratic society that will conform to the situation of their country.

The most precious success they have achieved in their building of a new, democratic society is that they have set up a truly people-oriented government.

What our people wanted first after greeting the liberation of their country was a true government of their own. I dispatched political workers to various parts of the country, and ensured that they helped people set up regional governments by their own efforts. Later, at the proposal of leaders of the democratic political parties and public organizations to set up a central power organ, a conference of representatives of democratic political parties, public organizations, administrative bureaus and people's committees was held in February last year, and the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea was established.

For the legal consolidation of the people's committees at all levels into power organs, elections to the provincial, city and county people's committees were held in November last year, and elections to the sub-county and ri (dong) people's committees in early this year.

To ensure that persons who enjoy the people's trust and are capable of serving them faithfully could be elected as their representatives, the candidates to the provincial, city and county people's committees were recommended jointly by the patriotic, democratic forces rallied behind the Democratic National United Front, and the candidates to the sub-county and ri (dong) people's committees were recommended according to the free opinions of the constituencies at their meetings. The elections of candidates were held on the principle of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.

You say that our election method is one that cannot be found in any Western capitalist countries, and the most free and flexible one that can comprehend people's opinions as they are. I am grateful for your understanding. We are convinced that ours is a democratic method of election that conforms to the actual situation of our country and is capable of correctly reflecting the people's political opinions.

On the basis of further consolidating by law the people's committees at all levels, the genuine people-oriented power organs in north Korea, through democratic elections, we established the People's Committee of North Korea (PCNK) in February this year.

The people's committees at all levels in north Korea are democratic power organs that represent the interests of workers, peasants and all other people, and lead them to the building of a new society. They involve representatives of the broad sections of the patriotic, democratic forces from all walks of life,

including workers, peasants, working intellectuals, urban petit bourgeoisie and national capitalists, who work devotedly for the interests of all the people.

The US imperialists and the reactionaries in south Korea are spreading false rumours, claiming that a communist dictatorship is in force in north Korea and democracy and freedom have been stamped out here. If you witness the realities of my country during your current visit, you will clearly realize how absurd the rumours are.

In north Korea, patriots who fought devotedly for the liberation of the country and working people who were subjected to suppression and maltreatment in the lowest echelons of society are working at responsible posts for the building of a new society.

One of them is Kang Jin Gon, chairman of the Peasants Union of North Korea. Born into a poor tenant's family, he experienced many difficulties. He participated in the March First Popular Uprising of 1919 and later engaged in the anti-Japanese struggle in Northeast China. For this, he was incarcerated for nearly 20 years. After the liberation of the country, he devoted his all to the building of a democratic, independent and sovereign state; in particular, he fought in the vanguard of peasants to abolish the feudal land-owning system in the rural areas. It was natural that our peasants trusted him and recommended him for the chairmanship of the Peasants Union of North Korea.

Patriotic-minded religious believers, too, are working at important posts of the people's committees at all levels, political parties and public organizations.

At the moment, the US imperialists and the south Korean reactionaries are spreading a rumour that there is no freedom of religious belief in north Korea and that religious believers here are persecuted.

Our people's government provides practical freedom of religious belief for all citizens. There are churches in various parts of north Korea, and the believers are engaged in religious activities without experiencing any discrimination. Take the Christians for example. They organized the Christian Federation of North Korea in 1946. Many religious believers are working as members of people's committees at all levels. The current Secretary General of the Presidium of the PCNK, Kang Ryang Uk, is a clergyman. He studied at a school run by a US missionary in his early days. Then, after graduating from a seminary, he became a clergyman. Even after liberation, he was a minister at a large church.

The misleading propaganda of the US imperialists and the south Korean reactionaries that religious believers in north Korea are persecuted is aimed at imbuing anti-communist ideology in south Korea and instigating confrontational sentiments between the south and north of Korea.

I hope that you will meet during your stay in our country religious personages like the Rev. Kang Ryang Uk, and social stalwarts like Kang Jin Gon.

You have expressed deep interest in the democratic reforms enforced in north Korea; I can say that the victorious democratic reforms are a great success our people have achieved in the building of a new country.

As our country had long been a colonial, semi-feudal society, we had to enforce democratic reforms to abolish the remains of feudalism and Japanese imperialist rule in all realms of social life if we were to build a new society.

In order to liberate the peasants, who account for the absolute majority of the population, from feudal exploitation and oppression, we first enforced the agrarian reform. The reform abolished the feudal land ownership and enabled the peasants, the

tillers of the soil, to become the masters of their land.

The agrarian reform was followed by the promulgation of the Labour Law and the Law on Nationalization of Major Industries. These laws have turned the factories, mines, rail transport and others formerly owned by the Japanese imperialists and their stooges into people's property, abolished the colonial, slave labour system, and brought about a fundamental change in the working and living conditions of the shop-floor and office workers.

As you are a woman, you must be quite interested in the lives of our women and their social empowerment.

In the past our women were condemned to a subhuman life under colonial and feudal maltreatment and oppression. Without freeing women, who account for one half of the population, from all manner of exploitation and oppression, we could neither carry out the historic task of building a democracy nor enforce genuine democracy. In order to solve this problem, we promulgated the Law on Sex Equality, and thus opened the road for women to take part in social life with socio-political rights equal to those of men.

Now our women are taking an active part in nation building with soaring patriotic enthusiasm. Many of them have become model workers and peasants, and a considerable number of them are working as cadres at people's power organs, political parties and public organizations.

As a result of the establishment of the people's government and enactment of democratic reforms, north Korea has been turned into a truly democratic society in which the working masses are the masters of the state and society.

In north Korea the economy and culture are also developing in an independent way.

In the past, the Japanese imperialists severely restricted the

development of our national economy. In order to exploit the resources of our country and invade the Asian continent, the Japanese imperialists set up some factories in Korea, but they destroyed that small number of factories when they were fleeing after their defeat. Now we are directing great efforts to rehabilitating the industries and developing the national economy.

We are experiencing many difficulties and hardships in rehabilitating the factories and enterprises destroyed by the Japanese imperialists and in developing our industries. The greatest difficulty is the dearth of technical forces; we also lack the funds needed for rehabilitating and building our industries. Moreover, we have no experience in administering the economy. However, our people are not yielding to the difficulties and hardships; they have turned out as one to rehabilitate the destroyed industries by themselves and develop them. Thanks to the devoted struggle of our people, many factories and enterprises have been reconstructed, and the country's industries are developing rapidly.

We are also directing efforts to developing agriculture.

North Korea has many mountains, and its land under cultivation is not so large, so it is short of food grains. To solve the food problem, we appealed to the peasants after completing the agrarian reform not to leave even an inch of land idle but bring it under cultivation, and took various other measures to increase grain production. As the peasants farmed well in the first year after liberation, true to the people's government's appeal, the acute food problem is being solved gradually. The crops are promising this year. If we have a bumper harvest this year, we can fully solve the food problem in north Korea.

This year north Korea drew up a national economic plan for the first time in the history of the Korean nation, and is

developing its economy in a planned way. The economic plan for 1947 envisages doubling industrial production compared to 1946. When we made the plan public, the reactionaries at home and abroad sneered that it was a pipe dream, and now they are doing their best to sabotage the implementation of this year's national economic plan. But our people are implementing the plan successfully by overcoming all the hurdles. According to the review of the implementation of the plan for the first half of this year, the industrial sector overfulfilled it by 8 per cent. In the course of implementing the plan for the first half of this year, our officials and working people gained firm confidence that they are fully capable of developing their country's economy in a planned way by their own efforts. We are convinced that we can fulfil this year's national economic plan without fail.

When this year's national economic plan is fulfilled, a great stride will have been made in laying the independent foundations of the national economy, and our people's standard of material and cultural life will have been greatly raised compared to the present.

In developing our national culture, we are paying primary attention to education.

After the liberation of the country, we abolished the colonial enslavement education system of the Japanese imperialists, established a democratic one so that everyone can learn, and set up many schools of all levels, ranging from primary schools to a university, where sons and daughters of the broad sections of the working people learn. This year the number of junior middle school students will increase by ten times compared to before liberation, and that of specialized school students about 33 times.

In consideration of the fact that illiterates account for the majority of the population, we are conducting an anti-illiteracy campaign as a mass drive under the unified guidance of the state.

Schools for adults are operating now in various parts of the country, and the persons freed from illiteracy at these schools number 500 000 as of February this year. We intend to free 800 000 working people from illiteracy by the end of this year. North Korea will before long become a country free from illiteracy.

The successes achieved in building a democracy in north Korea instill hope and encouragement into the south Korean people.

As you say, many people in south Korea are coming over to north Korea, crossing the 38th Parallel. Among them are workers, peasants, scholars, artistes and politicians. They are willing to participate in nation building while living in north Korea, where the political situation is stable and a genuine democracy is practised. To those who have come from south Korea, we provide all the conditions necessary for participating in nation building as suited to their hopes and abilities. As for students, we provide them with opportunities to learn to their heart's content at schools of various levels in accordance with their standard of knowledge.

You have asked me how we could achieve these brilliant successes in building a democracy in such a short span of time; the secret, in a nutshell, is that we firmly rallied the broad sections of the masses from all walks of life behind the people's government, and gave full play to their patriotic enthusiasm and creative initiatives.

When setting about building a new society after the liberation of the country, we appealed to those with strength to give strength, to those with knowledge to give knowledge, to those with money to give money, and to all people who truly love their country, their nation and democracy to unite closely to build a new country. Today the people in north Korea are firmly rallied behind their government, and are participating in building a

democracy with mounting patriotic enthusiasm. In the future, too, we will strengthen the unity of the patriotic people from all walks of life in building a new society, and give full play to their strength and wisdom.

I shall speak briefly about the prospects for the establishment of a unified and democratic government in Korea, an issue you are interested in.

Establishing a unified and democratic government and achieving the complete independence and sovereignty of the country is the ardent wish of all the Korean people.

As you know, after the Second World War the US and Soviet forces marched into Korea, dividing it along the 38th Parallel. This has created different political situations in the north and south of Korea. The Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Moscow in December 1945 adopted a decision that envisaged establishment of a unified and democratic provisional government in Korea. The democratic forces in Korea fully supported the decision, and hoped for its early implementation. However, the United States, out of its ambition to turn Korea into its colony, opposed in a sinister way the implementation of the decision. While instigating the reactionaries in south Korea to raise a racket against the decision, it intentionally scuttled the work of the USSR-US Joint Commission aimed at implementing the decision.

Owing to strong pressure from Korea and other countries, the commission resumed its work in May this year, but the United States is yet to demonstrate a sincere attitude to the agenda items. It insists that the groups of pro-Japanese elements, traitors to the nation, speculators, profiteers and terrorists be included in the negations for the establishment of a unified provisional government, claiming that they are “political parties” and “public organizations,” thus creating an artificial obstacle to the work of

the USSR-US Joint Commission.

Egged on by the United States, the reactionaries in south Korea are brutally detaining, arresting or murdering patriotic figures and other people who aspire after the establishment of a unified and democratic government. They assassinated Ryo Un Hyong, leader of the Working People's Party, in broad daylight in Seoul, and recently cracked down on a large-scale demonstration staged in support of the USSR-US Joint Commission. Whatever their schemes, the US imperialists and the reactionaries in south Korea cannot crush the will of the Korean people to establish a unified and democratic government on their liberated land.

You have said that I would be elected president if a unified government were established in my country, and that you hope to see me again in the government building in Seoul. Well, who should be the president of the unified government is an issue to be settled by all the people in the north and south of Korea. I only wish to work devotedly for the complete independence of my country and its prosperity, enjoying my people's trust and affection. I also hope to greet you again in a reunified Korea.

The current international political situation is developing in favour of the democratic forces. The people's struggle for national liberation and democracy is gaining momentum in several countries in Asia, and some of European countries have taken the road of democratic development. The growth of the democratic forces worldwide greatly encourages our people in their struggle for achieving the complete independence of their country.

The growth of the democratic forces will not be achieved without a hitch. Today the reactionary imperialist forces are running amuck to violate peace and stamp out the democratic forces. In particular, the US imperialists are undisguised in their

schemes to subjugate small and weak countries and nations in Asia, Europe, South America and other parts of the world. All the facts show that US imperialism is a great obstacle to the defence of peace and the achievement of democracy. All countries and peoples that value peace and democracy should be alert to the sinister moves of the US imperialists.

In today's complicated situation, when the reactionary forces menace the democratic forces in the international arena, progressive media persons like yourself have a very important role to play. By means of the "pen" of justice, they should lay bare and scathingly denounce the reactionary schemes of the imperialists and their stooges, and support the struggle of the democratic forces.

You have said that on your return you would give wide publicity to the peoples of the United States and other countries to the building of democracy in north Korea and the Korean people's struggle for the complete independence and sovereignty of their country. I am grateful for your promise.

I hope you will make more visits to our country. Here, eastern coastal area is good for holidaymaking in summer. If you go to Songdowon in Wonsan this time and enjoy yourself at the seaside, swimming and sun-bathing, it will be good for your health. You can also see the sights of Kumgang, a famous mountain in Korea.

I wish you every success in your writing, and hope that you will remain in good health.